

Message Text

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FOR USDEL CAIRO, SHERMAN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: WHITE HOUSE NEWS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING CARTER-BEGIN
MEETING DECEMBER 16.

1. EXCERPTS OF NEWS CONFERENCE AT WHITE HOUSE DECEMBER 16
FOLLOWING PRESIDENT CARTER-PRIME MINISTER BEGIN MEETING:

Q. THE STATEMENT SAYS THE PRIME MINISTER LAID OUT PROPO-
SALS, BUT NOWHERE IN HERE DOES IT SUGGEST THAT THE PRESIDENT
FOUND THEM EITHER HELPFUL OR GOOD. THERE IS NO CHARACTERI-
ZATION OF THOSE PROPOSALS. COULD YOU GIVE US ONE?

MR. POWELL: I THINK IT WOULD BE VERY UNLIKELY THAT WE
WOULD BE IN A POSITION OF CHARACTERIZING PROPOSALS PUBLICLY,
OR IDEAS PUBLICLY AT THIS POINT.

Q. JODY, DOES THE PART ABOUT STAYING IN CLOSE CONSULTATION
WITH BOTH SIDES MEAN THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL BE IN COMMUNI-
CATION WITH PRESIDENT SADAT ON WHAT HE GOT OUT OF THIS
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MEETING?

MR. POWELL: THE PRESIDENT HAS SPOKEN DIRECTLY WITH PRESI-
DENT SADAT THIS MORNING FOLLOWING THE CONCLUSION OF THE
MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, AND I THINK IT IS SAFE

TO ASSUME THAT THERE WILL BE OTHER COMMUNICATIONS.

Q. DOES THIS PROCESS IN ANY WAY INVOLVE A MEETING BETWEEN
PRESIDENT SADAT AND PRESIDENT CARTER OR ANY KIND OF A TRI-

LATERAL SUMMIT?

MR. POWELL: I KNOW OF NO MEETINGS PLANNED.

Q. WHY DID THE PRESIDENT CALL SADAT?

MR. POWELL: WHY DID HE CALL SADAT? I WASN'T THERE, BUT I THINK I CAN SAY WITH SOME ASSURANCE THAT HE CALLED HIM TO DISCUSS WITH HIM THE MEETING THAT HE HAS HAD WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN.

Q. DID HE HAVE SOMETHING TO PASS ALONG THAT BEGIN HAD PROPOSED AND CARTER WANTED TO SEE WHAT SADAT THOUGHT OF IT?

MR. POWELL: I DON'T HAVE ANY DETAILS FOR YOU ON THE DISCUSSION.

Q. WAS CARTER INVITED TO JERUSALEM BY BEGIN?

MR. POWELL: NOT SO FAR AS I KNOW.

Q. JODY, THE STATEMENT TALKS AT ONE POINT ABOUT THE COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT; THEN IN DETAIL, IT SAYS THE PRIME UNCLASSIFIED

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MINISTER OUTLINED PROPOSALS DEALING WITH EGYPT AND ISRAEL AND A PROCESS FOR THE PALESTINIAN ARABS WHICH WOULD BRING IN JORDAN, PRESUMABLY. WAS SYRIA NOT DISCUSSED AT ALL IN ANY DETAIL?

MR. POWELL: THE FOCUS HERE OF THE DISCUSSION, AS WE INDICATE IN THE FIRST PARAGRAPH THAT DEALS WITH THIS AREA, WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SEARCH FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE, WHICH WOULD NECESSARILY INVOLVE ALL THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT.

Q. HAS THE PRESIDENT, AS REPORTS FROM CAIRO INDICATED YESTERDAY, EXTENDED AN OPEN-ENDED INVITATION TO SADAT TO COME TO WASHINGTON?

MR. POWELL: LET ME TAKE THAT. I AM SURE THAT PRESIDENT SADAT KNOWS WHEREOF HE SPEAKS IF HE SPOKE OF THAT. I WILL HAVE TO CHECK.

Q. IS THERE ANY PLANS FOR THE PRESIDENT TO MEET SADAT IN SAUDI ARABIA?

MR. POWELL: I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY SPECIFIC PLAN BEYOND WHAT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED.

Q. WHAT ABOUT SPECIFIC PLANS?

MR. POWELL: WELL, SPECIFIC, GENERAL, BEYOND WHAT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED AS FAR AS SAUDI ARABIA IS CONCERNED.

Q. CAN YOU CHARACTERIZE WHETHER IT WAS HELPFUL OR FRUITFUL THIS TIME?

MR. POWELL: I WILL CHARACTERIZE THE DISCUSSIONS THIS MORNING AS SERIOUS AND FRIENDLY.

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Q. JODY, HAS THE PRESIDENT GOT ANY PLANS TO TALK TO ANY OTHER HEAD OF STATE ABOUT THIS MEETING? HE CALLED SADAT. IS HE GOING TO MEET WITH ANY OF THE SOVIETS TODAY, OR TALK TO ANY OTHER HEAD OF STATE LIKE ASSAD?

MR. POWELL: I DON'T KNOW OF ANY PLANS FOR THE PRESIDENT TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO ANYONE.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHY HE WOULD HAVE A SECOND MEETING? DID HE PRESENT SOMETHING THAT THE PRESIDENT SAID, "WE WANT TO THINK THIS OVER FOR A WHILE, AND WE WILL GIVE YOU SOME ANSWERS" --

MR. POWELL: BEYOND WHAT I THINK IS OBVIOUS, THERE WERE MATTERS DISCUSSED THIS MORNING WHICH WE WISHED, AS I SAID, TO -- I THINK IT WOULD BE CORRECT TO SAY THERE WAS A MUTUAL FEELING THAT IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE TO OBTAIN A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF THESE THINGS AND THAT IT WOULD BE PRODUCTIVE FOR THE DISCUSSIONS TO CONTINUE ONCE THAT WAS BEGUN.

Q. DID THE PRIME MINISTER EXPRESS ANY AGREEMENT AND SENSE OF DELIGHT THAT THE PRESIDENT RECOGNIZES THE PLO ARE COMPLETELY NEGATIVE?

MR. POWELL: I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT. I AM NOT IN THE POSITION OF SPEAKING FOR THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL.

Q. DOES THE PRESIDENT CONSIDER THIS TO BE ISRAEL'S MAIN RESPONSE TO THE INITIATIVES TAKEN BY PRESIDENT SADAT?

MR. POWELL: I AM NOT GOING TO CHARACTERIZE THE DISCUSSIONS BEYOND WHAT HAS BEEN DONE.

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Q. WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD NOW THAT THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP AFTER CHRISTMAS TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND ELSEWHERE WILL BE EXPANDED TO ANY EXTENT, EITHER EXPANDED IN TERMS OF THE KINDS OF MEETINGS, PEOPLE HE WILL MEET, OR IN TERMS OF

GEOGRAPHIC PLACES?

MR. POWELL: I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY PLANS TO CHANGE THE TRIP.

Q. THE STATEMENT REFERS TO THE PALESTINIAN ARABS. AS YOU KNOW, THAT HAS A KIND OF SPECIAL TERMINOLOGY THESE DAYS. THE ISRAELIS REFER TO PALESTINIAN ARABS, MEANING THE PALESTINIANS LIVING ON THE WEST BANK.

THE PRESIDENT USUALLY REFERS TO PALESTINIANS AND THE PALESTINIAN HOMELAND, WHICH PRESUMABLY WOULD ENCOMPASS PALESTINIANS LIVING OUTSIDE THE WEST BANK AS WELL.

MR. POWELL: I THINK IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE FOR YOU TO INTERPRET THAT PHRASE, ALTHOUGH, AS YOU KNOW, IT IS A PHRASE WHICH HAS BEEN USED BY PRIME MINISTER BEGIN. BUT IT IS NOT MY IMPRESSION THAT IT HAS BEEN USED EXCLUSIVELY AS YOU DESCRIBE IT. IN ANY CASE, I THINK IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DAY'S DISCUSSIONS, IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE FOR YOU TO PLACE THAT NARROW A DEFINITION UPON THE TERM.

Q. WHY WAS IT USED THAT WAY?

MR. POWELL: WE WERE DESCRIBING THE PRESENTATION OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL. THAT IS THE TERM HE USED IN HIS PRESENTATION. IT SEEMED TO BE A REASONABLE TERM, WHICH, AS I SAID, SHOULD NOT BE QUITE SO NAROWLY DEFINED.

Q. WAS MILITARY AID DISCUSSED?

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MR. POWELL: NO. IF IT WAS, IT WAS NOT DISCUSSED IN MY PRESENCE. IT DOESN'T STRIKE ME THAT IT EXACTLY FIT THE GENERAL MEETING.

OBVIOUSLY, I AM NOT GOING TO DEAL WITH ANY OF THE DETAILS OF THE IDEAS AND DISCUSSIONS THAT TOOK PLACE, EITHER TO CONFIRM OR DENY THINGS THAT CAME UP.

Q. WAS THERE ANYTHING RESOLVED ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE?

MR. POWELL: I REFER YOU TO THE STATEMENT, THE PORTION OF THE STATEMENT IN WHICH IT SAYS QUITE CLEARLY THAT THE PRIME MINISTER OUTLINED PROPOSALS CONCERNING THE FUTURE RELATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL AND A PROCESS FOR RESOLVING THE ISSUE OF THE PALESTINIAN ARABS.

Q. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROPOSALS AND THE PROCESS IN THAT SENTENCE? DOES THAT IMPLY THE UNITED STATES IS LOOKING FOR MODERATE PALESTINIANS WHO CAN BE

FOUND TO NEGOTIATE WITH?

MR. POWELL: I DON'T THINK IT IMPLIES ONE THING OR THE OTHER IN THAT REGARD. IT STATES THAT THE PRIME MINISTER OUTLINED PROPOSALS CONCERNING A PROCESS RESOLVING THE ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN ARABS. IT SEEMS TO BE FAIRLY SELF-CONTAINED.

Q. DID THE PRESIDENT SUGGEST ANYTHING TO MR. BEGIN ON HOW TO SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION?

MR. POWELL: THE DISCUSSIONS THIS MORNING SO FAR AS DURING THE TIME THAT THEY WERE CONDUCTED IN MY PRESENCE, WERE PRIMARILY A SITUATION IN WHICH -- AS I THINK THIS STATEMENT INDICATES -- THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE ISRAELI UNCLASSIFIED

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DELEGATION DISCUSSED AND PRESENTED THOUGHTS AND IDEAS AS CHARACTERIZED HERE IN THE STATEMENT.

Q. WAS THE CALL TO PRESIDENT SADAT INITIATED BY THE PRESIDENT?

MR. POWELL: YES, BY THIS PRESIDENT.

Q. YES, I AM SORRY. IT HAD BEEN ORDERED EARLIER ON OR WAS IT SORT OF AN AFTERTHOUGHT AFTER THE MEETING?

MR. POWELL: I DON'T THINK YOU CAN CHARACTERIZE IT AT ALL AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT BY ANY MEANS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT DISCUSSION MAY HAVE TAKEN PLACE PRIOR TO THAT. I SEE FROM A NEWS REPORT THAT PRESIDENT SADAT INDICATED HE EXPECTED TO HEAR FROM THE PRESIDENT SOMETIME TODAY, SO I ASSUMED THERE WAS SOME, I AM SURE THERE WAS SOME BASIS FOR THAT. WHETHER A PERSONAL CALL WAS EXPECTED PRIOR OR OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATION, I JUST CAN'T SAY. BUT I WOULD, AS YOU COULD EXPECT, REJECT THE CHARACTERIZATION AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT. I AM SURE YOU DIDN'T MEAN IT THAT WAY.

Q. THE PRESIDENT SAID YESTERDAY THAT HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO CONVEY TO MR. SADAT HIS JUDGMENT ON THE VALUE OF ANY IDEAS MR. BEGIN PRESENTED. WAS THAT WHAT HE WAS DOING THIS MORNING?

MR. POWELL: I THINK WHAT HE SAID WAS THAT HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO GIVE HIS VIEWS PRIVATELY IF HE THOUGHT THEY WERE -- IF HE HAS OR DOES CONVEY ANY VIEWS, I THINK IT WILL BE LIKELY TO BE PRIVATE.

Q. HE SAID HE WOULD CALL IF HE FOUND THIS BEGIN PROPOSAL TO BE WORTHWHILE. HE SAID IF HE DIDN'T THINK IT WENT FAR ENOUGH, HE WOULDN'T HESITATE TO TELL BEGIN THAT. THEN HE DID NOT CARRY IT THE NEXT STEP AND SAY HE WOULD TELL

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SADAT HE DIDN'T THINK IT WENT FAR ENOUGH. IS THERE ANY INFERENCE IN THIS PHONE CALL TO SADAT ABOUT THE RELATIVE MERITS OF THE BEGIN PROPOSAL?

MR. POWELL: I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HE DISCUSSED WITH PRESIDENT SADAT, OTHER THAN I WOULD THINK IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME THAT HE TALKED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED --

Q. ONE MORE MIDDLE EAST QUESTION. THERE IS A LINE IN THE STATEMENT THAT SAYS, TO THE EFFECT, THE TEST OF RECEPTIBILITY OF THE PROVISION ULTIMATELY WILL DEPEND ON THOSE WHO SIGN THE PEACE TREATY. I NEED A LITTLE CLARIFICATION. PROVISIONS AGREED UPON BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL, FOR INSTANCE, WILL THEY NEED THE CONCURRENCE OF ANY OTHER PARTIES OR JUST THOSE TWO COUNTRIES THAT SIGN THAT PEACE TREATY? THE REFERENCE IS A LITTLE AMBIGUOUS.

MR. POWELL: I FRANKLY DON'T THINK ANYTHING PARTICULAR SHOULD BE READ INTO THAT REFERENCE EXCEPT THAT AS THE PRESIDENT INDICATED YESTERDAY, WHAT WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO CONVEY THERE IS THE FACT THAT THE QUESTION BEFORE US HERE IS NOT FINDING PROPOSALS AND IDEAS UPON WHICH ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES CAN AGREE, BUT UPON FINDING PROPOSALS AND IDEAS UPON WHICH ISRAEL AND THE MODERATE ARABS IN THAT AREA CAN AGREE. THERE WAS NO ATTEMPT TO DRAW A FINE DISTINCTION THERE.

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